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CANADIAN BEEF CATTLE

Canada

Canada's beef population is approximately 8 million head, of which 3.5 million are adult breeding stock. Several breeds make up this dynamic industry, chiefly Hereford, Simmental, Charolais, Angus, Limousin and Shorthorn.

Beef cattle are raised in all 10 Canadian provinces, with about 80% being raised on western Canada's rangeland

The British breeds were imported into Canada in the mid 1800s and, in recent years, European breeds have been added to the national herd. The majority of slaughter cattle are the product of two- and three-way crosses to achieve maximum gains from hybrid vigor.

Breed associations conduct the affairs of the purebred sector of the industry under the authority of the Canadian Live Stock Pedigree Act. Each registered or certified animal is issued a record which indicates the animal's official identification, its parentage for at least two previous generations and any other information the breed organization has specified to appear on the certificate. Breed purity is thus integral to the quality of Canadian beef cattle.

The Canadian beef industry has benefitted greatly from the research projects conducted by Agriculture Canada, universities and private industry. The introduction of new production techniques and genetic material into the beef system has improved the productivity of Canadian cows and the growth potential of their calves. At the same time, Canadian cattle have been bred to maintain the hardiness necessary to withstand the severe weather that can prevail in this country.

In cooperation with provincial governments, Agriculture Canada operates a performance and herd management information program for beef producers. Approximately 60 000 animals are performance tested on farms annually. Genetically inherited, economically important traits in beef production are objectively measured and statistically analyzed by government personnel. The department also provides a National Sire Monitoring program which evaluates the true genetic value of beef sires by analyzing the performance of their progeny. In addition, provincially administered central test stations provide direct comparisons of bulls from different herds through growth and reproductive tests. In 1986, over 10 000 bulls completed tests at more than 100 test stations.

Canadian beef cattle are selected for their efficient growth and reproductive characteristics, carcass quality and suitability on the range. Genetic selection over the generations has enabled a typical Canadian steer to finish in feedlots at 500 kg at 15 months of age or less. Genetic improvement has been accelerated through the use of artificial insemination (A.I.) and embryo transfer.

1985 CALF CROP STATISTICS FOR CALVES ENROLLED ON GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS (kg)

Total calves weaned	Average adjusted 200-day weight	Average daily gain
57 192	240	1.01

The national beef grading system administered by Agriculture Canada in cooperation with the industry facilitates the marketing of beef cattle in Canada. The introduction of objective fat measurements for carcass grading, the ability of producers to select animals in accordance with grade specifications and the introduction of European breeds have resulted in a marked reduction of fat, increased muscling and greater consumer confidence in value and flavor of Canadian beef.

The rigid health regulations enforced by federal, provincial and practicing veterinarians as well as the disease testing conducted at Canadian laboratories have resulted in Canada's freedom from serious livestock diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease, bluetongue and brucellosis.

Canada is fortunate to be able to offer to the world a wide range of genetic material in its beef cattle. The large number of breeds provides a basis for selecting animals to suit any management practice or market requirement. Canada exports approximately 2500 head of purebred beef cattle annually, and 200 000 doses of beef semen and embryos to over 25 countries around the world to upgrade their domestic herds.

For further information on Canadian beef cattle, please contact:

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